FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

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Since 1949 the purpose of Fellowship in Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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Cover Photograph by Janet Gnall

At heart, you are a loving, caring and compassionate person. The elderly woman walking ahead of you trips and falls. Without thinking, you rush to help her up. A neighbor needs you to babysit her youngest while she rushes her older one to the hospital. You don't think twice. The best and truest part of you instinctively reaches out to help those in need. Those in trouble. And you like yourself much better when you act from your heart instead of your head.

Yet, far too often, we don't help. We harden our hearts and look away from the pain and suffering around us. We tell ourselves we're too busy, or it's not our problem, or we give grudgingly. Half-heartedly. Why? What blocks the spontaneous expression of our innate compassion? We have so much to offer each other. Why do we hold back?

Question yourself the next time you turn away from someone else's need, and the answer becomes clear. Fear and self-protectiveness. We're brought up to prize and protect our personal security, our individuality, our privacy, our "specialness." We feel threatened by "other's" illness and poverty, old age, homelessness. The most diminished and deprived and oppressed among us remind us too vividly, too uncomfortably, of our own vulnerability, our loneliness, our mortality. So we put them out of our hearts and out of our sight.

Fortunately, there are ways that can help us dissolve the fear and swollen self-concern that block the expression of our God-given compassion for all beings.

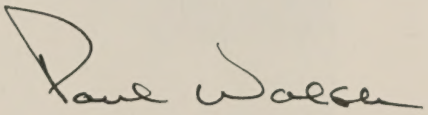
Through prayer and meditation we can transcend the fearful and defensive side of ourselves. Whenever we join with others in ritual and devotional services in temple, church, or wherever there is space for more than one of us; whenever we sit, kneel, or walk in solitary meditation and interior prayer, we open our hearts to God and come closer to becoming one with the unconditional love that is the source and goal of our being. And in that communion with the divine reality we are given a vision of the unity underlying all life. We gain the insight that God's love means not just loving this or that person, but loving all of humanity; loving all of creation.

Love everyone! Impossible? Not really. All we need do is to make a start–and keep walking the path. In their wonderful book, *How Can I Help?* Paul Gorman and Ram Dass* point out that each step we take, the smallest act of caring–filling a bowl on a soup line, welcoming a stranger, comforting a frightened child–reinforces our inherent generosity, makes it more likely that we'll obey our loving hearts next time, too.

Compassionate action as a spiritual path, opening our hearts to pain and suffering, reaching across the boundaries that separate us and doing something to help–all are part of a process that contributes to our spiritual growth at the same time that it helps those in need. Gandhi said, "I believe in the essential unity of all people and for that matter of all that lives. Therefore, I believe that if one person gains spirituality, the world gains, and if one person falls the whole world falls to that extent." Each of us can significantly transform this troubled world, as well as ourself, by the simple act of reaching out to help where help is needed.

This holyday season, then, let us celebrate our blessings with joy and gratitude. But let us also pray for the courage to open wide our hearts to those we are given the opportunity to help–in whatever way we can be of service to them.

As the Reverend Richard Boeke wrote recently in *Fellowship in Prayer*, "To pray is to risk changing your life, by serving others. Let us pray."



Paul Walsh

* The reflections on spirituality and service in this article owe much to the teachings and writings of Ram Dass. *Namaste*!

I have just returned from a very beautiful retreat center, the Meher Baba Spiritual Center in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. I was there at the invitation of Bill Stephens, a beloved *FiP* writer, and his wife, Peggy, whose radiance gave me a powerful feeling of God's presence. Bill and Peggy introduced me to some of the warmest, most open and loving people I have ever met, and the days we spent together were some of the happiest of my life.

We stayed in charming wood cabins which are scattered throughout 500 acres of woods full of lakes and paths covered with soft pine needles and bordered by a mile of ocean front beach that seems to look into eternity. We spent hours in prayer each day in the center's most sacred places–like the "barn," a simple building made of cedar ("the eternal wood"), and the room where Meher Baba stayed when he visited from India. Evenings we attended programs of music, lectures, films, and readings all centered on God's love. Most wonderful of all, we had long talks with Jane Barry Haynes, the Center's gracious Director, and her son Charles, who inherited his mother's intellect and deep spirituality.

If you have a need for peace and beauty, and can get to South Carolina, by all means spend a few days at the Meher Baba Center. My visit there was one of the holiest experiences of my life.

Mary Ford-Grabowsky

For more information about the Center or about Meher Baba or Meherabad, the Center in India, you may telephone (803) 272-5777 or write to Dr. William M. Stephens, c/o FiP, 291 Witherspoon St., Princeton, NJ 08542. He promises to answer all letters.

Meher Baba

Late have I loved You, O Beauty so ancient and so new; late have I loved You: for behold You were within me, and I outside; and I sought You outside and in my unloveliness fell upon those lovely things that You have made. You were with me, and I was not with You. I was kept from You by those things. Yet had they not been in You, they would not have been at all. You called and cried to me to break open my deafness: and You sent forth Your beams to shine upon me and chase away my blindness: You breathed fragrance upon me, and I drew in my breath and do now long for You: I tasted You, and now hunger and thirst for You: You touched me, and I burned for Your peace.

Augustine of Hippo

God, of Your goodness give me Yourself for You are sufficient for me. I cannot properly ask anything less, to be worthy of You. If I were to ask anything less, I should always be in want. In You alone do I have all.

Julian of Norwich

From my mother came the idea that going down to the sea repaired the spirit. That is where she walked if she was sad or worried or lonely for my father. If she had been crying, she came back composed; if she left angry with us, she returned in good humor. So we naturally believed that there was a cleansing, purifying effect to be had; that letting the fresh wind blow through your mind and spirits, as well as your hair and clothing, purged dark thoughts; that contemplating the ceaseless motion of the waves calmed a raging spirit.

Robert MacNeil

I don't think there is anyone else who needs God's help and grace more than I do. I feel so forsaken and confused at times! And I think that's exactly why God uses me: because I cannot claim any credit for what gets done. On the contrary, I need God's help twenty-four hours a day. And if days were longer, I would need even more of it.

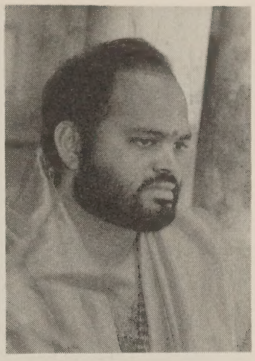
Mother Teresa of Calcutta

God sees not as we see; for we look on the outward appearance, and God looks on the heart.

I Samuel 16.7

God Dwells Within You as You

SWAMI NITYANANDA



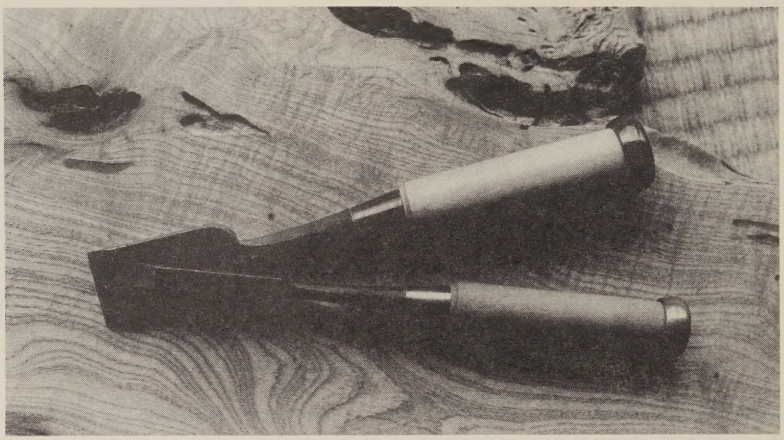
The spiritual life calls us to surrender again and again and again. For those who acquire this attitude, "everything really happens for the best."

Baba Muktananda was a great Siddha Master who lived in the constant awareness of his own divinity. Over the years he met many, many people and his message to all of them was, "Meditate on your Self. Worship your Self. Honor your Self. Your God dwells within you as You."

Even though the message is very simple, it can be a difficult thing to follow. It seems very easy to meditate, honor and worship the inner Self and to find the God that is within, yet as we go on with our lives, we find that it is not so easy to apply in our daily activities.

To embark on the spiritual path, one needs courage, determination and perseverance. We also need two of life's important qualities; patience and acceptance. The Upanishads say, "The spiritual path is like walking on the razor's edge." The ego has fear of change and growth and tries to stop us from allowing ourselves to become transformed. We can look at our lives and see how much we fight, how much we hold ourselves back and resist change. Yet what is it we are resisting so much? When we begin to focus on the greatness within us, what is there to give up; the sense of being small and unworthy.

The leader of Temple Shanti Mandir in Pine Bush, NY, Swami Nityananda learned spiritual disciplines from earliest childhood. Like his parents, he became a disciple of Swami Muktananda, one of the great spiritual teachers of the 20th century. In 1982, he was appointed as successor to Muktananda together with his sister Swami Chidvilasananda. To arrange a visit to the Temple, you may telephone (914) 744-6462.



Tom Dunham

A Spanish mystic once said, "We should be like a stone that allows itself to be carved by the sculptor. Every time the sculptor touches it with his chisel, it does not say 'Stop, let me be a rock!' It allows itself to be moulded into a beautiful statue."

This process of letting go, of becoming free is what we call *sadhana*. To some people it is a joyous experience, because it is so liberating or freeing, and to others it can be difficult. If we learn to let go of our attachments and cultivate an attitude of surrender and perseverance, we discover that everything really happens for the best. Everything in life takes time. We are born, we grow, we attend school and go through a process of learning. In the same way, on the path of meditation, we go through a process of acquiring information and knowledge, ultimately understanding and experiencing it within ourselves.

When we meditate and focus upon God, we are really focusing on the Truth that lives within our own hearts. One way that we can have a direct experience of our own Divinity is by chanting the name of God. During chanting, we repeat the same names over and over, as this allows us to become immersed in our love for God. There is a poem which describes the state of God-intoxication beautifully. It was written by an unknown, ecstatic lover of God who was established in this state.

We walk around in our own intoxication
Filled with that joy
Whoever comes before us

We offer our salutations
We bow to them
Realizing they are nothing
But the same God that I worship
And experience inside myself

We walk around in total biss
In total intoxication
Whatever situation arises
No matter what the circumstance
We will never be afraid or be scared
Because from our Guru we have received
This very unique knowledge
This very unique understanding

This joy, this bliss that I have found
I don't even know how to describe what it is
This is what is called living
This is what is called life.

Somehow this state of consciousness seems so far from the one in which we live. We read the poems of these ecstatic beings and wonder, "How could I ever attain that?" In our normal day-to-day lives, we are totally identified with our bodies and with the world we live in, but as we focus within, this identification begins to change. We begin to realize that we are not the body or this personality and that we are much greater than these things.

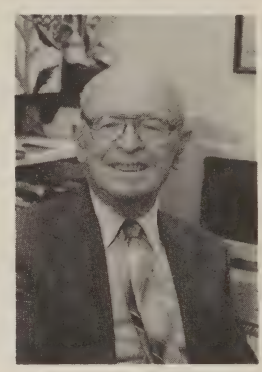
The spiritual path is like walking on the razor's edge.

Once we get a taste of the inner freedom, our yearning for that experience grows. Once we have tasted that joy, we want to experience it again and again. Through the regular practice of meditation and chanting, we can nurture it, make it grow and finally become established in the awareness of Truth. Then wherever we are, whatever we are doing, we can always feel that peace and joy within.

Know that we can't bring God to our mental level, but it is we who must elevate ourselves to the experience of freedom and divinity. Remember that the spiritual path is not about becoming God, it is about becoming aware that we are God.

Older People Finding Fulfillment

FRANK HUTCHISON



For more and more of our elderly men and women spirituality is "a force used in service to people around them."

Everything in our lives is inextricably tied together and fashioned into a workable whole by the spiritual forces within and around us. Our bodies and minds, by themselves, cannot create a fully-rounded human being. Without spiritual understanding, we are like a three-legged stool lacking one leg. Our total person can function only when body, mind, and spirit support and sustain one another. The body by itself is merely a physical machine; the spirit alone becomes a disembodied, ghost-like apparition; the mind separate unto itself is powerless. Only the three, in harmony, can make a perfect human being, giving satisfaction to the self and being a blessing to the world.

Those who are ignorant or neglectful of their spiritual well-being rarely enjoy a serene and fulfilled life. Older men and women who fear death suffer from a serious spiritual deficiency. They lack the trust and assurance of a solid believer, and into this vacuum flow uncertainty, fear, and terror.

On the other hand, there is overwhelming evidence that the ills human flesh is heir to, including the consciousness of an inevitable death, cannot

A retired Presbyterian pastor, Frank Hutchison is now a full-time writer in the field of gerontology. He is the author of Aging Comes of Age, *Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991, from which this article was adapted.*

destroy the equanimity, confidence, and trust of older people who possess a sustaining spiritual life.

Many elderly people accomplish remarkable feats of surviving our sometime inhospitable, you and beauty-oriented, competitive society. What is it that keeps them going? It seems clear that what sustains them through personal losses, physical deterioration, and insecurity about the future are the inner resources at their command.

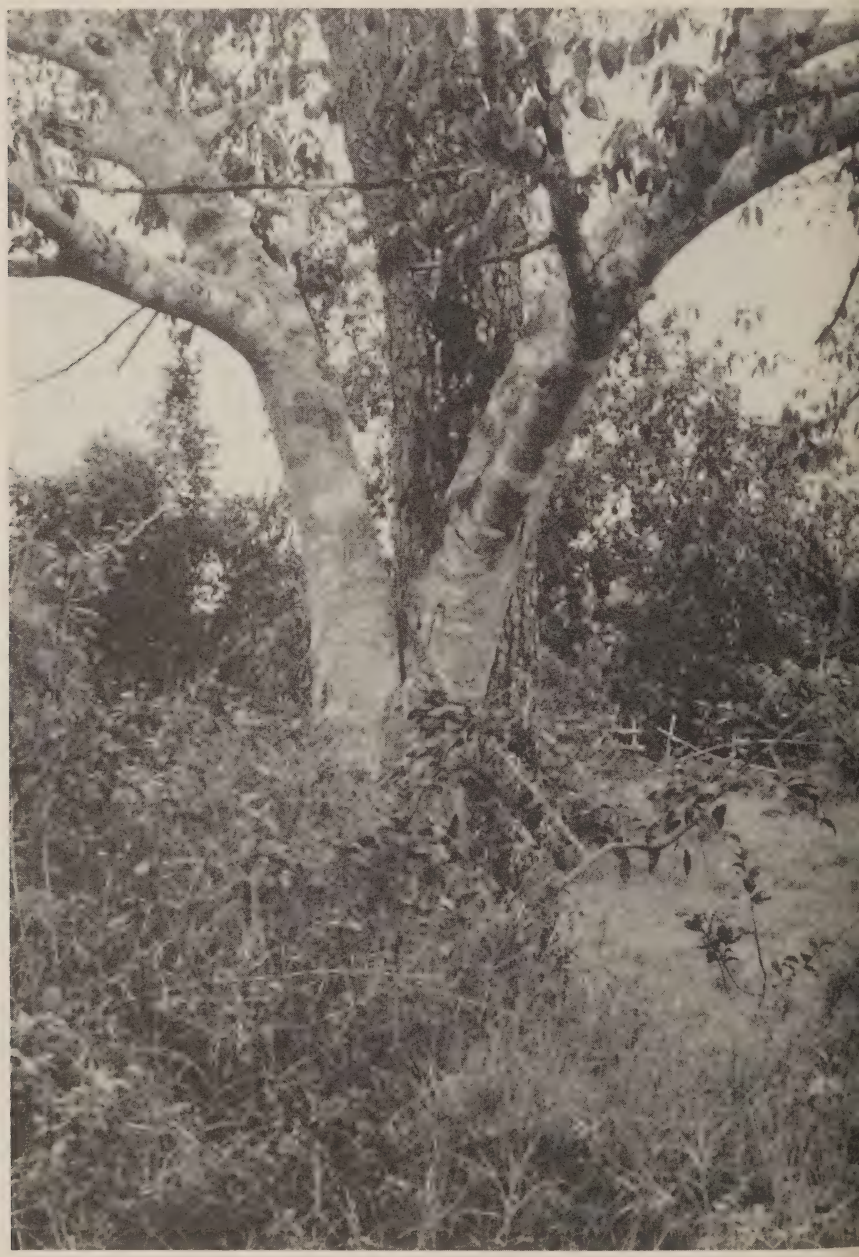
This is because, as the psychologist Abraham Maslow insisted, men and women need spiritualization: "The spiritual life is part of the human essence. It is the defining characteristic of human nature, without which human nature is not full human nature."

A Gallup report on Religion in America stated that 76% of the respondents between 50 and 64 years of age felt that religion was the most important influence in their lives. 87% of those 65 and older felt that their religion was important to them.

The use by Gallup of the term "religion" raises a question: Are religion and spirituality two terms for the same reality? They can be, of course. For most people they are synonymous. "Religion" usually refers to formal religious institutional observances, to what takes place in an organized church or synagogue. On the other hand, "spirituality" suggests a personal relationship with the God of one's soul or with unseen and unnamed forces in the universe and in one's own self. Spirituality may be found in and be enhanced by a specific religious institution or it may not.

However found, the spiritual dimensions of life should dominate one's entire being and should constitute one's main life force. According to Leo E. Missinne, professor of gerontology at the University of Nebraska, "It is as basic a need as our biological need for food, air, and water, and for our psychological need for love and social interaction." The Belgian priest continues, "For the elderly especially, spirituality is the search for meaning in life . . . We can only be mature adults if we relate positively to suffering, not asking, 'Why did this happen to me?' but rather 'What can I make of this situation; what can I do with it?'" to find meaning in suffering is difficult, but it is necessary . . . Old age also brings a period of reflection on life's meaning . . . Perhaps they always did see more meaning in life and that is why they have lived so long."

What may be considered an authoritative definition of spiritual well-being is that of the National Interfaith Coalition of Aging (NICA), an organization established by Protestant, Jewish, Orthodox, and Catholic bodies: "The spiritual is not one dimension among many in life; rather,



Brooks Walsh

it permeates and gives meaning to all life. The term spiritual well-being, therefore, indicates wholeness in contrast to fragmentation and isolation. 'Spiritual' connotes our dependence on the source of life, God the Creator."

Above all, spirituality is an affirmation of life. It declares that life is good despite pain and suffering. It is an expression of the value one attributes to one's own life. Going beyond one's self, it expresses a deep concern for humankind's struggle for peace, justice, and equality. Spirituality creates in us a sense of responsibility for the whole human race.

Spiritual well-being, as the NICA statement makes plain, comes through individual initiative and concern—but never in a vacuum. What counts is the interaction between the person, other people, and the larger community. It is never found once and for all, but is a growing, becoming, developing condition which adapts itself to one's life and one's necessities. Spirituality is what we make of it.

The NICA definition includes everything of meaning and concern in our lives, past, present, and future. Spirituality carries us beyond an "inward" openness to God or some vague outside spiritual forces. It creates in us an "outward" recognition of human relationships and involvements. For older persons, spirituality should be a force used in service to people around them. It should employ their wisdom, devotion, life experience, and a lifetime of searching for whatever things are most true and real to human life.

> For the elderly especially [spirituality] is the search for meaning in life . . . we can only be mature adults if we relate positively to suffering, not asking "Why did this happen to me?" but rather, "What can I make of this situation; what can I do with it?"

What are the essential components of this force of spirituality in the lives of older people? They include a childlike simplicity, a total trust in God and all of life, a commitment of one's self to what is highest and best in the world as we understand it, a compassion toward the downtrodden and suffering, a dedication of one's powers to bring about the realization of what we consider most desirable in life. To this could be added the quality of reverence.

Forty or fifty years ago, if we were becoming a Scout, one of the pledges

we took was to be "reverent." How much that meant to us at the time is questionable. We probably gave it little thought.

A half century later, what does "reverence" mean to us? If we have been sensitive and aware of life around us, we have seen that it has a meaning far beyond our earlier conception and is related to all of life.

If our aging process has been at all in line with life changes around us, we have discovered that "reverence" has a much broader meaning than we could have imagined earlier. It touches our appreciation of human love. But if we were sensitive to circumstances and influences around us, we came to feel that it touched our attitude toward the beauty of the world around us.

Going beyond this, we sensed the sublimity and infinite glory of the human species, especially that marvel of all marvels—our body—and above all the unparalleled miracle of the human mind.

If this sense of reverence continued to grow in us, all of life was included in it. We became, to some degree, like Albert Schweitzer. He was the missionary physician, theologian, philosopher, organist, builder and restorer of organs, authority on the life and music of Johann Sebastian Bach, author, and Biblical scholar. One recognition of his greatness was his being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

While riding a shallow boat on the Ogowe river in Equatorial French Africa—now Gabon—he saw crocodiles in the water around him, birds in the air, and the rich jungle fullness on every side. Suddenly there came to his consciousness the phrase: Reverence for Life. In a flash he saw that this had been, even unknowingly, the keystone and central core of his life and his thinking. All life had a built-in value and sacredness which gave ultimate meaning to grass, wild animals, the starry skies, and human beings.

Few of us could ever touch Albert Schweitzer, but we can think along his lines and can learn from this man who, incidently, lived to the advanced age of 90.

The mark of our maturity may well be the degree to which we sense reverence and practice it, that is, revering, bowing before, opening up ourselves to, allowing unseen influences to touch us, having a sense of awe and wonder, a feeling of veneration for all of life and all who are living, ultimate respect for the divine in us and in everything around us.

Spirituality is a many-sided quality of human existence. It takes us into everything touching our best lives. It drives our physical machines to

greater usefulness, and our minds into paths of both contemplation and action. Rather than "elevating" us into some visionary other world, it leads us into nearby social and political action, into using our prestige and character to benefit the less privileged in our midst and around the world. Spirituality helps us face up to life's hard choices.

Broadening our spiritual horizons may turn out to be the most demanding challenge facing older people. In the end, it could prove to be the most satisfying.

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Rock Ritual IX

ROBERT O'ROURKE

Merely touching his sacred turquoise stone allows Bob O'Rourke to "spiral backwards millennia in time and space to the beginning of things."

The small stone I carry in my pocket is turquoise . . . smooth-polished, blue-green, flecked with a matrix of black. It is a sacred stone discovered in the underground Kivas and nature shrines of the Anasazi Indians, the prehistoric, "old ones." These people lived close to Mother Earth and Father Sky in places called Mesa Verde, Chaco and Canyon de Chelly. Centuries ago they mysteriously disappeared from their cliff homes leaving as part of their legacy a belief in turquoise as a hallowed symbol of The Great Spirit. This tradition is shared today by Native Americans of the Southwest: Pueblo, Hopi, Apache, Navajo, Zuni, Papago, Pima.

The complete mystery of turquoise will forever belong to Native Americans. They alone know the secrets and deep spiritual meanings. It is enough for me to touch my stone and in thought spiral back millennia in time and space to the beginning of things:

when the sun first warmed the earth;
clouds formed–the rains came;
seas and land appeared;
a seed sprouted;
animals birthed their young;
human-kind breathed in life.

My timeless turquoise rock was there! Hidden in silence. Deep in the earth. Waiting . . .

Contemplation of these infinite events fills me with profound humility and an acute awareness of my own short life-span. In the broad expanse of eternity I am but a speck of dust blown by the wind. Words from a distant past come to me:

There is a season for everything
a time for every matter under heaven. (Eccl.3.1)

Folk art carver, writer, poet, Bob O'Rourke makes his home close to nature in Colorado. Lisa Smith, whose illustration accompanies this article, is Director of the Squash Blossom Art Gallery in Aspen, CO.

I wonder . . .

What time is it in my life–in this season?
Sixty-six summers have graced my life since I was born . . .
What commitments call to me?
How do I spend my time?
What is most appropriate? Now!

Partial answers emerge as I consider how once the rhythm and pace of life was measured by the stars, moon and the elliptical course of the sun. Before digital time: clocks, schedules, calendars. I decide:

> In the brief existence left to me I shall take the short view of savoring life-each-day and thus escape the cynicism and hopelessness that so often looms over seemingly catastrophic tomorrows. Today I will laugh and enjoy life as best I can! In this short space of today I shall choose affirmation and with compassion do what I can for humankind, birds, animals and our beloved earth.

Kahlil Gibran inspires me,

> Forget not that the earth
> delights to feel your bare feet
> and the winds long to play with your hair.

I dedicate myself to celebrate the freshness of each new day; enchanting variety of the seasons: cold snow, warm breezes, soft rain. I thank the "old ones" who centuries ago wandered across the Great Plains and taught me their way of looking-long at nature . . . of seeing beauty in the seasons-of-the-moon. They knew . . .

OCTOBER: *Moon of Falling Leaves (Sioux)*
NOVEMBER: *Moon When the Wolves Run Together (Cheyenne)*
DECEMBER: *Moon When the Little Black Bears Are Born (Omaha)*
JANUARY: *Moon of the Blizzard Winds (Sioux)*
FEBRUARY: *Changeable Moon (Kansa)*
MARCH: *Moon When the Ducks Come Back and Hide (Ponca)*
APRIL: *Moon of Little Frogs Croaking (Oto)*
MAY: *Moon of Budding Trees and Flowers (Sioux)*
JUNE: *Strawberries Ripening Moon (Ojibwa)*
JULY: *Moon of Red Blooming Cherries (Sioux)*
AUGUST: *Moon When the Buffalo Bellow (Omaha)*
SEPTEMBER: *When the Leaves Become Yellow Moon (Kiowa)*

Little rock in my pocket, jiggling along as I walk, remind me always of the mystery of life . . . the magic of nature . . . the essence of time.

The author is indebted to the St. Stephen Indian Mission on the Arapaho-Shoshone Reservation, Wyoming, for the names of each month.

Power

RICHARD B. HUGHES

"Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." But in the Christmas story there is "great power under the control of great goodness and great love," power we can trust and count on.

We spend much of our time at my university studying power. We see tyrants using it ruthlessly and our own leaders pushing constantly against the restraints on power built into our constitutional system.

We observe lobbyists and their clients cleverly marshalling power in the service of greed. We see parents using positions of power to abuse their children, and one spouse using a power position to harm the body or spirit of the other spouse. We see teachers and religious leaders using power not to liberate people but to control them.

It is, of course, possible to use power responsibly. However, our textbooks, like the news reports we hear and read, seem to be one long and dreary litany of individuals or groups taking advantage of others. Indeed, we often make heroes and heroines of some politician, some business or union leader, some sports or media figure, some wheeler-dealer, who plays the games of power with skill and success–never mind the bodies strewn along the way. The best of us is in thrall to power.

Once each year, our concentration on power is interrupted briefly as we focus on a baby. What is more powerless than a baby. A baby is vul-

A professor of history at St. Edwards University in Austin, Tx, Dr. Richard Hughes holds advanced degrees in religion and history. He has written widely for both academic and general readerships.

Cliff Moore

nerable, defenseless, dependent and weak. It has no accomplishments and no accumulations.

And furthermore, a baby will not play the games of power with you. It is not impressed if you have in your pocket the largest wad in town. It does not care if your face and figure merit a cover photo on *Cosmopolitan* magazine. It does not even give a hoot if you have a Ph.D. or an M.B.A.

Rather, it responds to a soft and gentle voice, an accepting smile, eyes that speak of care and love. Babies, and especially the Baby in the creche, turn our attention from size, strength, force, confrontation and power. They force us to another vocabulary: small, gentle, guileless, open, humble, accepting, peaceful and loving.

The Christmas Baby is, I suggest, God's annual attempt to change our vocabulary, to turn our values upside down. It is not an easy task: the still, small voice must be heard by ears attuned to strident orators, vulgar entertainers, roaring machines and stereos turned to full volume.

There is nothing so frightening as the idea of God as raw and arbitrary power; nothing so offends our moral sense. Raw and arbitrary power is exactly what we do not have in the Christmas story. *We have great power under the control of great goodness and great love. That is the only kind of power we can ever trust*!

When each December the Christmas story interrupts an eleven-month focus on power, I think of two elevators in a tall building. One is rushing upward as human beings seek to be as powerful as God; another elevator is rushing downward so that God, leaving power behind, can show human beings how to be human.

God cannot do that by standing in some safe place and hurling admonitions at us. God must walk beside us, touching our arms now and again, saying, "I know how tough it is to live in the world you live in."

The Scriptures speak of the coming of Jesus as light arriving to illuminate our darkness. So we light our Christmas trees, our malls and our streets. The divine light is, of course, as powerful as the sun which turns night into day. However, I suggest that in keeping with the Christmas emphasis on small rather than large and powerful things, we picture God as a still, small beam of light illuminating a tiny, dark corner of a single human soul.

Let there be such light!

You are Ever New

You, O my God, are ever new,
though You are the most ancient–
You alone are the food for eternity.
I am to live forever,
not for a time–
and I have no power over my own being;
I cannot destroy myself,
even though I were so foolish
as to wish to do so.
I must live on,
with intellect and consciousness
forever,
in spite of myself.
Without you
eternity would be another name
for eternal misery.
In You alone
have I that which can stay me up
forever:
You alone are the food of my soul.
You alone are inexhaustible,
and ever offer me
something new to know,
something new to love . . .
and so on for eternity
I will ever be a little child
beginning to be taught the rudiments
of Your infinite divine nature.
For You are Yourself
the seat and center of all good,
and the only substance
in this universe of shadows,
and the heaven
in which blessed spirits
live and rejoice.
Amen. *John Henry Newman*

Quiet the Trees

Quiet the trees; quiet the creepers all.
    In the sky's tranquil lap burns the sun's ray.
In my heart's temple doth the silence fall,
    Worshipping Thee, Thou, Silent Majestic. Thou
Replenishest this tranquil heart. O Thou
    Eternal, Absolute, with silence fill
Me and with song, in secret, silent, still.
    C. R. Das

Quiet Ways

God, lead me into quiet ways.
May each daily step bring calm–
A serenity of spirit.
Give of your love to me
So that I may give to others.
Look down, guide, and keep me
In my hours of need and joy.
I know your compassion will surround me.
Your strength will add to mine.
Your love will bring me knowledge, peace,
And the ability to think well
And be eternally grateful for the gift of life.
    Helen R. Briggs

Janet Gnall

This Holiday Season Give the Gift of "Wisdom, Love, Goodness, and Joy"

Those gifts come in each issue of *Fellowship in Prayer,* writes Tod Broderick, of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Many of our readers feel the same way. That's why we suggest *Fellowship in Prayer* as a most thoughtful and loving gift to friends, family, and loved ones in celebration of the holy season that will soon be with us.

Just print their names and addresses and send the list, along with your check, ($16 per subscription/$22 outside USA) in the envelope inserted in the middle of this issue. A gift card will be sent announcing your gift of *Fellowship in Prayer,* which will begin with the February issue.

The Way of Prayer

We have received so many requests for our new booklet *The Way of Prayer,* that we are going to a third printing. We are delighted with the response!

The eight-page booklet, with its sections on "Forms of Prayer," "Attitude Toward Prayer," "The Practice of Prayer," how to organize prayer groups, and "Suggested Readings," clearly answers a deeply felt need and makes an ideal holiday gift for yourself as well as for your friends!

Just make out your check for $18, and we'll include a copy of *The Way of Prayer* with every gift subscription of *Fellowship in Prayer* you order.

What is Wisdom?

VINCENT KAVALOSKI

Are there many paths up the holy mountain, or only one?

Once there were two sisters who aspired to wisdom. They longed to see the mysterious face of God's love but they disagreed on the pathway.

The two lived in the mountains and often they walked together with their friend, the musician, to a flat rock overlooking the valley far below. As he played on his flute, bittersweet songs of love gained and love lost, the sisters would watch the white puffy clouds drift across the mountain peaks and dream of what their lives could be.

The older sister would say: "The village below in the valley is inhabited by soulless beings who think only of food, sex, children and death. But up there, on the mountain peaks, up toward the empyrean heavens, is purity and stillness, peace, so deep that it must contain the face of God!" But the younger sister shook her head vigorously: "No, up there is only insubstantial clouds and nothingness. It is only the peace of the graveyard. But down there," she pointed to the village in the valley below, "there is *life*, the frenzy of joy and love and change. *There* the wisdom of the soul waits, like the turbulent waves of the sea!" Thus they would argue, and then suddenly look at each other and laugh. They were so different! How could they have sprung from the same parents!

One day they were sitting on their lookout rock listening to their friend's flute songs of longing and love, when a wandering monk happened by. He spoke with burning eyes of his monastery high in the mountain peaks. The older sister grew more and more excited: "To rise before dawn each day in prayer and fasting, and to meditate on the infinity of God's love, surely this is the well-spring of all wisdom!" The younger sister pleaded with her: "God lives among the people, God lives *in* the people! Come to the valley, come down with me to Life!" But the older sister was resolved and left with the pilgrim. The younger sister watched her for a long time, winding up the steep rocky slopes. She wondered whether they would ever meet again. Then she bade farewell to their

A philosophy teacher at Edgewood College in Madison, WI, Vincent Kavaloski is Co-director with his wife of the Ecumenical Partnership for Peace and Justice.

Tom Dunham

friend, the flautist, and she departed for the valley below to seek her destiny. The high, mournful sound of the flute grew fainter as she descended, until it seemed like a child's dream, dying in the distance.

The years drifted past like falling autumn leaves, leaving no trace. The older sister joined the hermitage on the high lonely peaks and lived an ascetic life of prayer, fasting and contemplation. She grew in peace and holiness, but somehow never quite had the mystical experience which she craved in her heart's secret place. She could never quite see the face of God's love. The younger sister, meanwhile, down in the valley, had tempestuous love affairs, fought for right and justice, and wrote a book of erotic poetry. She traveled the countryside with a merry band of minstrels and defrocked monks, performing bawdy songs, and bittersweet tragedies. Though her life was full with friendship, art, love and adventure, somehow there was a secret emptiness that no song could fill. One day her troop passed near the mountain of her youth. She gazed up at the cloud-covered peaks and wondered where her life had gone. She had known the fire of love and the ashes of hate; she had known the passion of artistic creation and the beauty of friendship. But in the end, she had missed wisdom; she had not seen the shining face of God.

Then far off, floating in the still air, she thought she heard the sad sound of a flute. She climbed up rapidly, to the lookout rock of her youth, where the old minstrel lay dying. He was playing his last song. As she bent over him, she felt another, familiar figure behind her. Despite the depredations of time, she knew it was her sister.

Together the two old women wept and prayed over their dying friend, the muse of their lost youth and dreams. So this is how it will all end, they thought. "This is the ending of all beginnings."

When the two sisters finally looked up at one another through tears of love, they were transfixed. It was like looking into a mirror, a mirror of one's very soul. They saw in each other's face the same deep wrinkles of care and sorrow, and in each other's eyes, the deep pools of hurt and love and longing for the infinite. They saw in each other what neither could see in themselves alone.

The two sisters looked across the decades of their lives, lives so different, and saw deep in each other's eyes the light that flows like liquid fire in the veins of the world.

The two sisters looked into each other and saw deeper even than death, the radiant face of God's love.

Brooks Walsh

The Last Wolf

The last wolf hurried toward me
through the ruined city
and I heard his baying echoes
down the steep smashed warrens
of Montgomery Street and past
the few ruby-crowned highrises
left standing
their lighted elevators useless

Passing the flicking red and green
of traffic signals
baying his way eastward
In the mystery of his wild loping gait
closer the sounds in the deadly night
through clutter and rubble of quiet blocks

I heard his voice ascending the hill
and at last his low whine as he came
floor by empty floor to the room
where I sat
in my narrow bed looking west, waiting
I heard him snuffle at the door and
I watched

He trotted across the floor
he laid his long gray muzzle
on the spare white spread
and his eyes burned yellow
his small dotted eyebrows quivered

Yes, I said.
I know what they have done.

Mary TallMountain

The above appeared in the January/February 1988 issue of The Animals' Agenda, *P.O. Box 5234, Westport, CT 06881. Used with permission.*

Prayer and Death

MARTHA R. BASSIRI

A fateful accident taught this young mother and her small children the power of prayer.

This is about prayer. And death. And perhaps about another dimension of prayer I had yet to discover and experience for the first time.

I was bringing the children back to school from a field trip. We were on a winding country road. We came around a rather sharp turn and there he was. A dead man in the road. He was lying partially under the truck that had evidently hit or dragged him. His motor cycle was overturned, in bits and pieces all over the road, and the man was also in pieces, parts of his flesh scattered here and there. It was so utterly shocking that all I could do was gasp and try to breathe and immediately fear for the children. I turned to look at them and their little mouths were hanging open and they too were trying to breathe, their five year old minds trying to make sense of what they were seeing. I could feel the tears welling up in me and at the same time was putting the car in reverse, hoping to somehow get us out of there, get the children away from the body. Too late. Behind me the cars were already stopping and up ahead it was the same. Cars stopping, people getting out and seeing the body, gasping, covering their mouths, whispering words of shock and disbelief. I had this urgent feeling that I had to do something, something to help

A freelance writer and Montessori teacher in Lexington, KY, Martha Bassiri says that she has met the Holy One through the experience of teaching.

The suggested donation for a year of *Fellowship in Prayer* is $16.00. Many readers, however, send more than that amount as a way of becoming a "Spiritual Friend" to those unable to contribute (especially men and women in hospitals, nursing and old age homes, and religious institutions).

In addition to sending in your own contribution and request to receive *FIP*, won't you become a "Spiritual Friend" to someone in need? You will earn their lasting gratitude—and ours.

☐ I enclose $16.00 ($22 for foreign subscriptions). Please send *FIP* to me:

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Please use the back of this sheet for your comments.

INTERFAITH NETWORK

AND

INTERFAITH PRAYER GROUPS

Members of Fellowship in Prayer in 80 countries form a global spiritual community of men and women — many of whom organize groups or correspond with each other in order to share spiritual insights, and to pray with and for each other.

If you would like to exchange letters with other *Fellowship in Prayer* readers, or be part of a prayer group in your area, send us your name and address, and we will list it in our next issue.

(PRINT CLEARLY)

Name _____

Address _____

_____

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Telephone No. _____

☐ I would like to exchange letters with other *Fellowship in Prayer* readers.

☐ I would like to join a prayer group and would appreciate hearing from groups in my area.

☐ Our prayer group welcomes new members. If interested, please call me.

☐ I would like to help organize a prayer group in my area and to hear from others interested in joining.

☐ I would like ____ copies of *The Way of Prayer* (at $2 per copy).

us bear this, something more than a bunch of words and explanations. It came to me then. Pray. So I found myself telling the children very calmly that we were now going to do what you do in situations like these. When someone is badly hurt or dead, you pray for them. Without another word these little ones all folded their hands, closed their eyes, and I began to pray aloud. I prayed for the man in the road, for all of his sins to be forgiven and for his soul to go to God. I prayed for his family and his wife and children if he had any and then for his mother and father who would be feeling sad when they found out about their son. I prayed for the man in the truck and his family as they would be feeling bad about the accident. And I prayed for all of us who were frightened and wanting to help but not knowing just how to do that.

When I opened my eyes the entire scene had changed. Outwardly it all looked the same. The body was still there. No one had covered him yet. People were still walking about, more coming, more getting out of their cars to see what the hold up was. But inside of me it had all shifted. My panic was gone. My anxiety for the children was too. In the midst of this we had gathered together and formed a close and safe unit. And now the dead body had become a person, a very dear and special someone, neither foreign nor remote nor frightening. He was no longer alone, out there, in the road, no longer separate and apart from us but had now been invited in. Into our car and into our hearts. And what I really felt was it wasn't AS IF our prayers created this. It was simply like this now. He was our friend, we were all in this together and there was nothing to be frightened of or about any longer.

Perhaps the children sensed this through my calm. Perhaps they too were changed by the prayers, by the longing in all of our hearts to somehow carry the man to heaven, to accompany him along his way, to not let him die alone. I do not know. But I do know he remained with us for many day afterwards and will remain with me for the rest of my life. On the way back to school we talked about death and funerals and the soul and all of the things five year olds want to talk about after such an experience. And in a few days I had found out his name and his parent's address we all sat down and made some gifts. Drawings. A letter. We hoped it would comfort them to know that at the time of their son's death some little children were right there with him, praying for him.

Prayer changes us. Prayer opens us, opens us to being available to what is really there all the time: a tender mercy, a terrible compassion, right

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in our midst, right in our very own selves. Perhaps these prayers were given to us to transform a scene of horror into a scene of mercy and even comfort. I am so sorry such a young man died such a seemingly senseless death. And I am thankful we were all there to care for him, to bring him close, before his journey home.

Members of Fellowship in Prayer in 80 countries form a global spiritual community of men and women—many of whom organize groups or correspond with each other in order to share spiritual insights and to pray together. If you would like to hear from or write to people in our Interfaith Network, please send your name and address to us at 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542, and we will list it in our next issue.

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Pregnant with Possibilities

KAREN JAENKE

All our religions are rich in symbols of pregnancy, labor, birthing and nurturing. Recovering the early meanings of these sacred feminine symbols could recharge our spiritual practices with fresh life and energy.

A story in the Bible tells about a lively reunion of two women who were both pregnant, and soon to give birth to leading religious figures of their day. One is Mary, the mother of Jesus; the other is Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. The meeting of the two women is a spirit-filled experience, perhaps heightened by their shared condition, full of anticipation and aware of the profound mystery of the new life gestating within their very body and being. Their reunion culminates in a life-transforming experience of spiritual ecstacy.

Mary has long posed a dilemma for me. Not only for me, she has long posed a dilemma for men and women in the West, reflected in the two opposing, even warring views of her found in Protestantism and Catholicism. Catholics idealized and venerated her, or rather, idealized certain aspects of her womanhood while suppressing others. Meanwhile, Protestants sought to annihilate and obliterate her in all aspects from religious memory. What was idealized about her in Roman Catholicism was her virginal, receptive and motherly qualities, which created for the West a distorted image of womanhood in which passivity, chastity and domestication became the sole ideals of the feminine. Think of the images created of her in Western art—she is almost universally depicted in passive postures, often as the nurturing madonna, usually with pale, white virginal skin.

Mary is thus a very ambiguous figure in the West, highly revered on the one hand, yet reviled to the point of obliteration on the other. And those qualities in her that are revered are selective and partial, representing only one dimension of full womanhood. Amid these mixed messages, Mary stands as a metaphor for all women in the Christian West.

A former prison chaplain, Rev. Karen Jaenke is working on a doctorate in Religion and Psychology at Drew University in Madison, NJ.

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The ambiguity that we find in these intense and opposing reactions to Mary is the ambiguity that Western women experience in their daily lives. What has happened to Mary in these lopsided and distorted projections is what has happened to all Western women as well.

But Mary is also linked to a much more ancient tradition that reaches deep into the human past, pre-dating the Protestant/Catholic split, or even the Judeo-Christian era. As Mother *of* God, Mary is linked to Mother God. That is, as Mother *of* God, Mary is linked to the ancient Mother God, to the earliest human religious sentiments, in which the divine was pictured and worshipped primarily through images of the Divine Mother.

This way of understanding the divine emerged naturally to our earliest ancestors, who, not yet grasping the full role of paternity, saw the mother spontaneously generate new life from her very being. Woman as the mysterious life-giver formed the analogy to the Divine Life-Giver. When, like us, our early ancestors speculated about the origin of life and the meaning of death, their first intuition of the sacred was of the Earth Mother as the cosmic womb, the source of life and ground of being. As a consequence, the female and her body processes, including those related to

the miracle of giving birth, were regarded as sacred, as manifestations of the divine life force.

Even the name Mary connects us to the ancient symbolism of the sea as the Cosmic Womb, the place of all birth and rebirth. The Latin and Spanish word for "sea" is *mar(e)* from which we get the English words "marina" and "maritime," and from which the name "Mary" is also derived.

More profoundly, this connection between the sea or *mar* and the cosmic womb or Mary is more than linguistic, more than a word-game. For as we now know scientifically, life itself originated in the sea, in the oceanic waters. For 2.5 billion years, all life-forms floated in the womb-like environment of the planetary ocean. At the beginning, life did not gestate within the body of a creature, but within the oceanic womb containing all organic life.

In order for more complex life forms to develop and survive on land, it was necessary to recreate the oceanic environment on a small and mobile scale. And this is what the female body with its womb is, this is what possibilities it represents, this is what Mary represents as Mother of God, as Mother God. From her come forth all the possibilities of life. She gives birth to life, she gives birth to divine life, she gives birth to the divine son.

And who is the divine son whom she births? And why is he divine? He is divine because he is the redeemer, because he, like the mother, will give birth to a new humanity, a redeemed humanity.

But how does he redeem humanity? He redeems by means of his birth into the world and the receiving of its wounds, symbolized by the sword which pierces his side at the crucifixion. Medieval paintings of the crucifixion show Christ exposing his wound, from which blood and water flowed, as from a womb in childbirth. Similarly, one sees in this writhing on the cross the labor pains of one giving birth to a redeemed humanity. Pierced by a soldier's sword, blood and water pour from his body, just as a woman in childbirth. It is a moment of such significance that we symbolically repeat it in the setting of the table of the Eucharist, when water is poured into the wine. Similarly, the chalice from which we drink is an ancient feminine symbol of the vessel or bowl of the life-giving womb.

In these ritual acts we find symbolic expression of a mysterious truth: that in order to partake of healing and rebirthing power, Jesus must accept the wound, and the labor and birthing aspects of woman. The man

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suffering from such a wound is no ordinary man; he is the man who has transcended the duality of human/divine, of male/female, of life/death. Thus the wound in the side of Christ becomes the womb of Christ, through which a new humanity is born.

I could have called this article, "If Advent were Mary." What would it mean if Advent were Mary? If Advent were Mary, we would be free to recover these earlier sacred meanings associated with pregnancy, birthing and motherhood.

If Advent were Mary, we would be free to think of this liturgical season as a time of pregnancy. Just as we immediately recognize that Christmas is about the birth of the divine son, we might also recognize that Advent is about pregnancy, about the pregnancy of his mother, Mary. We often speak of situations being pregnant with meaning, or pregnant with possibilities, and this we might also say about Advent: it is pregnant with meaning, pregnant with possibilities. Similarly, we think of Advent as a time of anticipation, waiting and expectation, and what better metaphor for this time of heightened expectation is there than pregnancy.

Similarly, I have tried to suggest that Christ takes on aspects of the female birthing experience in order to give birth to a new, redeemed humanity–his labor on the cross, his wound in the side which became a womb birthing the new humanity; the blood and water which pour from his side, in imitation of a mother's womb in childbirth, which is ritually re-enacted at every Eucharist.

If Advent were Mary, we would be free to once again see the sacred present in each of these aspects of feminine experience, and so to more fully celebrate and be grasped by the Advent season.

Ask Angela

BARBARA ACKERMAN

Do you have a question of the heart or spirit that needs attention? Angela, our canine sage-in-residence, would love to help. Please write to her in care of FiP, 291 Witherspoon St, Princeton, NJ 08542, and she will give you her answer in our next issue.

Dear Angela,

In the introduction to your column you are referred to as a canine Sage-in-Residence. What are the rewards of the job and are there any pitfalls?

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Very Interested

Dear Very Interested,

Thank you very much for your question. I welcome the opportunity to speak this month about something a bit more personal. I love my life as an aging sage. Yes, even the aging part is okay. I am learning that feeling useful and older makes a good balance, and good balance makes a meaningful merry life. Not only do I get to loll around in my old age, but I get to do it with purpose. Column writing distracts me from mundane canine concerns that might sap my time and energy. When I am giving counsel I am not scratching my fleas or puttering off to see where my next meal is coming from. All of us need these little breaks from our daily routines and concerns, don't you think?

Another great benefit of my work is having a special place where I am free and encouraged to share the secrets of my soul. For me, having such a place is a great gift.

Another perk of my work is that my best abilities are used. Work that uses our greatest gifts feels good and helps us feel whole and healthy. Everything clicks. While some canines are natural hunters or sheepherders, I am a natural ponderer. What better work could I do than to ponder parables for a spiritual advice column.

Though I love being engaged in a noble endeavor the best thing of all

is that column making requires me to spend quality time with my best beloved buddy Barbara. Although we may go for days without physical contact we are always in communion and this is my greatest bliss.

As with many jobs there is a down side to being a canine sage-in-residence. As a canine I am singularly interested in the here and now of things. Due dates, schedules and deadlines go against my fur. Though Barbara is in charge of paper, pens and time management we sometimes have had problems. For example, I am sitting under my favorite bush being one with the universe. Suddenly Barbara puts in a frantic appearance full of chit chat about the hours left till our due date. All of this fretting is more than an old guru like me can take. Since it is impossible to dictate a column to a frantic heart I find I must slip into the basement to my blanket, leaving my buddy perplexed and column-less. Through trial and error we now know that our best working arrangement includes an energetic trot-sniff, a quiet lap-sit, a festive Cheerios party and a deep shared snooze.

One of the pitfalls of being a natural ponderer is that you naturally ponder yourself into worry and full fledged hemming and hawing about all kinds of issues.

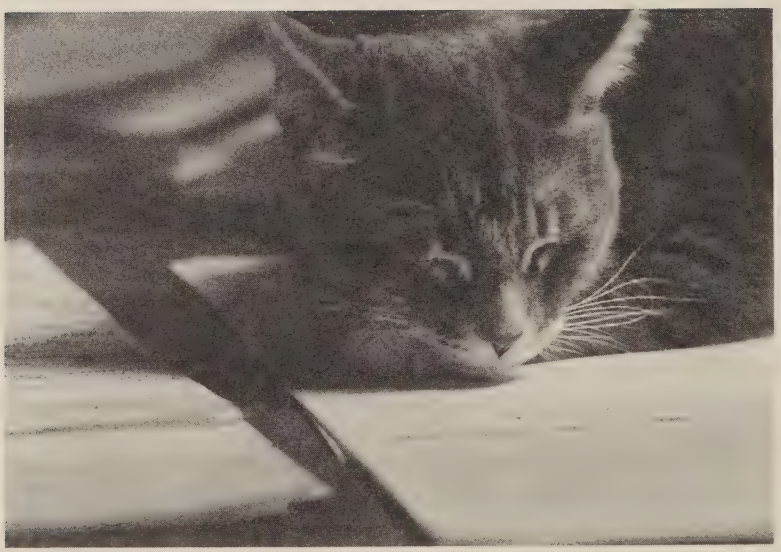
The first issue that comes up as I begin pondering is what I call the guru trap. Now that people are listening, what do they *want* to hear from me? What do folks *need* to hear? What do people *expect* to hear? What advice *should* a sage be dishing out? When speaking of love for example, don't people *expect* to hear a sage suggest loving everyone all the time? Do I go ahead and honestly share my personal truth, my own more cautious approach to love? What is the best response for a growing guru to make?

Another piece of the guru trap that needs to be dealt with is the issue of image making and image maintenance. There are moments in my column when, as a guru I would like to appear calmer, gentler, smarter, sweeter, braver, better behaved, better groomed, and less flea-dipped that I actually am. There are instances when I wish I appeared more like Lassie, but these instances are brief. I am proud to be the mischievous mutt I really am. But I also want to be seen as a "good girl." When it comes to the guru trap I've found for better snoozing; honesty is the best policy and always wins out in the final draft. Ultimately I feel that the truthful sharing of my heart, my failings and quirks, will be of the most use to my readers and friends. This ultimate conclusion is not always reached without some soul searching and toe-nail chewing.

The biggest drawback to being a canine sage-in-residence occurs on days when I am feeling flustered, frazzled, inconsolable and loving it. It is at these times when I may hear the soothing tones of a family member speaking words that are vaguely familiar to me. My beloveds are actually suggesting that I follow my own advice! There is nothing more inconvenient for a canine sage-in-residence with a stubborn streak than having your own words of wisdom come back to haunt you.

This is the good, the bad and the uglies of life as a sage.

Faithfully,
Angela



Janet Gnall

ETHICS OF ENLIGHTENMENT: ESSAYS AND SERMONS IN SEARCH OF A BUDDHIST ETHIC

by Ronald Y. Nakasone, Dharma Cloud Publishers, Fremont, CA, 1990, 164 pages, hardback.

Basic Buddhist beliefs–especially the doctrine of interdependence–are clearly and persuasively presented in Professor Nakasone's brief but illuminating book. More importantly, the linked qualities of compassion and wisdom that are central to Buddhist practice in the world are presented in very moving explorations of contemporary ethical issues such as abortion and euthanasia and such universal and timeless problems as pain, suffering and death. Clearly, the Reverend Nakasone is a man who practices what he preaches: "In an interdependent world, since what we do touches all beings, we are compelled to act in a manner that will benefit all." *PW*

COMPASSION IN ACTION

by Ram Dass and Mirabai Bush, Bell Tower, New York, 1992, 298 pages, paperback, $11.00.

In their preface, the authors write that "This book is for those of us who feel called to reduce the suffering that surrounds us on the planet and who also feel that the deepest responsibility of each of us is to be more fully aware of who we are, to live closer to the truth. It is part of a tradition that says that the two happen simultaneously, that each nourishes the other."

As we survey the wreckage of an era in which "rugged individualism" has been the ideal and "Me first" the top priority, Ram Dass and Mirabai Bush remind us that we are all inextricably interrelated and that what we do to and for others we do to or for ourselves. Self-fulfillment through service to others not only serves our own best interests, Ram Dass tells us, it helps heal all our relations, as Native Americans say–meaning all of God's creation.

As a practical matter, what can we do to help alleviate suffering in our own community? Mirabai Bush offers a wealth of helpful advice on how and where to start and how to find the way of helping others that is most in harmony with our own time, talents, resources and impulses of the heart. A wonderful book! *PW*

FACING THE WORLD WITH SOUL: THE REIMAGINATION OF MODERN LIFE

by Robert Sardello, Lindisfarne Press, Hudson, NY, 1992, 188 pages, paperback, $14.95.

A psychotherapist practicing in Texas, Robert Sardello has conceived a spiritual psychology for the healing not only of the *human* soul but of the *world's* soul. Sardello believes that the symptoms of the world's disarray (like fragmentation, depression, cruelty, violence and absence of beauty), have infected all our institutions with a severe pathology, much as they can contaminate the individual psyche. Medicine, education, media, technology, religion, and other institutions all exhibit this soul sickness, he says. If there is any way out, it is to use the unavoidable pain experienced in one's own soul to heal the pathological state of the planet's soul. "The question of soul pain is not what to do *about* it, but what to do *with* it," he writes. Throwing ourselves into the arena of cultural salvation could mean our own salvation. *MFG*

HOW TO BE HAPPIER DAY BY DAY: A YEAR OF MINDFUL ACTIONS

by Alan Epstein, Ph.D., Viking Penguin, New York, NY, January 1993 publication, 329 pages, paperback, about $16.00.

Drawing on Zen Buddhist wisdom and the beliefs of the Amish, Dr. Epstein offers a suggestion-a-day for actions that increase awareness of the present moment and–hopefully–happiness. His advice covers a wide range of human activities we might not fit into the average day: some simple, some challenging, some humorous or touching. Memorize a poem. Say something special to a loved one. Fast. Hold someone's hand. Put everything you value in one place and contemplate them.

Instructions for reflection, meditation and gaining maximum growth from the day's act accompany each suggestion. Lighthearted and enjoyable, this book is a welcome complement to more traditional daily guides. *MFG*

We welcome your comments. Please send them to The Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542.

You have been sending to our Lodge for some time your valuable spiritual publication, which we have treasured and made available to a large circle of aspiring seekers on the path of Truth.

It is with a feeling of deep sorrow that we are writing to inform you that the founder of Perfect Peace Lodge, Dr. K.M.P. Mohamed Cassim, peacefully shed his mortal body, leaving behind a considerable number of friends and relatives who sincerely miss his gentle mien and mature spiritual guidance.

It is our humble wish and prayer that the good works he was carrying out should be continued without cessation in the interests of the people of all religious persuasions and communities whom he was endeavoring to serve. We shall therefore be grateful if you will continue to send *Fellowship in Prayer* to Mrs. Cassim at our Lodge. Thank you.

Mrs. K.M.P.Mohamed Cassim; Veyangoda, Sri Lanka

I am renewing my subsciption and ordering subscriptions for my oldest continuous friend and for several people I don't know who can't afford their own subscriptions but need the comfort of your pages. God knows those pages have been a blessing to me!

In a wonderful new book, *A Return to Love*–a much needed blending of psychology and theology–Marianne Williamson writes, "The holiest places are those where ancient hatreds have been healed." I would add to that, the holiest *people* are those *in whom* ancient hatreds have been transcended and healed. Your publication is full of the "how-tos." God bless you all and the good works you do.

Miriam Barnum; New York, NY

Thank you for sharing consciousness of the Spirit. May we all realize our reality as children of the Light.

Arthur Evans; Denver, CO

One of the heartfelt delights of my life in recent years has been the gift of your *Fellowship in Prayer* journal. It is wonderful to have so many friends on the journey with you, discovering new life in joyful anticipation of the Eternal. I pray that each heart may "be a swinging door"–uniting us in the knowledge that God is All in All.

Vincentius Zimmer; Chicago, IL

This is a wonderful publication. I credit your efforts with my return to a disciplined prayer life.

I gather that you have a significant prison ministry and would like to know more about your efforts in this area.

Marie Sheley; Houma, LA

I am writing, first of all, to tell you how much I enjoy your journal. I came across it when I was a student at Princeton University and have since then often borrowed it from friends–whenever it crossed my path.

Secondly, I am wondering if you would send me a free subscription. I am currently unemployed and unable to pay. I will make a donation once I find a job.

Whatever you decide, thanks very much, and keep up the wonderful work!

R.B.; Jacksonville, FLA

I have recently read an issue of *Fellowship in Prayer* and thoroughly enjoyed the diversity of thought and writing. Throughout the last year I have personally struggled with prayer, both in form and content. I discovered that writing my own prayers helped me focus and gain a renewed commitment to this element of my Christian life. Your publication affirms my belief in the need, at least of some of us, to use reading and writing as an integral part of our prayer lives. Thank you.

Janet Thonn; Wheaton, IL

Nothing brings people more deeply into relatedness than prayer. One day I was hospitalized at Monmouth Medical Center in Long Branch for alcohol treatment, and somebody stopped by my bed to give me a copy of your beautiful publication. I started reading it and loved it, because it made me feel closer to God and to all human beings. It also made me reflect a lot about alcohol, and today I don't drink.

Thank you for this beautiful journal. Each issue has helped me along the way toward loving spiritually.

Gonzalo Rodriguez; Hoboken, NJ

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We welcome articles on prayer, meditation, spiritual experience, religious faith or practices, and similar topics. Preference is given to experiential manuscripts. Manuscripts should not exceed 1500 words, should be typed, double spaced, either on 8½ by 11 inch paper or on a 5¼ inch floppy minidisk, 2S/2D, in WordPerfect and sent to The Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542. Please include a biography of no more than five lines.

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